February 1998
TRIPLE R

THE UNHINGED RIGHT

Paul Gottfried

A prediction that I made five years ago, that neocons would be pulled by their dependence on the liberal left steadily leftward, has turned out to be (alas) all too correct.

Most dramatically this can be seen in the softening of neocon opposition in the gay lobby. Two weeks ago, when President Clinton announced his intention to use presidential power to "sensitize" school children to gay lifestyles, Bill Kristol and Bill Bennett appeared on Sunday TV to present the "conservative" side. Both deplored the president's insensitivity to the "overriding issue" of gay suffering caused by the gay lifestyle. Both neoconservatives tried studiously to avoid being judgmental, but made discreet references to sexually-transmitted disease in the gay community. The drift was that the Democrats were not being sensitive to gays but merely pretended to care.

In a syndicated column, Ben Wattenberg went beyond this expression of sympathy toward gays to call upon gay leadership to "educate" the American public: "If the well-funded gay-rights movement reallocated some of its lobbying and PAC money to a public service campaign, it could probably persuade many more Americans that being gay has nothing to do with the ability to change a spark plug." Noting proudly that most Americans now accept gay lifestyles, Wattenberg insists that President Clinton's federally enforced sensitizing crusade has become superfluous. "Since 80 percent of all Americans polled oppose any form of discrimination against gays in the workplace, it would therefore make sense for the gay lobby to turn its efforts toward persuading more Americans that being gay has nothing to do with the content of one's character, either."

This paraphrase by Wattenberg typifies the problem faced by neocons generally in finding acceptable positions on social issues by which they might differentiate themselves from the liberal establishment. Operating as a bogus opposition to a perpetually leftward moving left, the targets open to the "neocon Right," as I observed in 1993 at an American Cause conference, have become progressively smaller. The savage media attacks made on Pat Buchanan after his speech at the Republican Convention in 1992, for associating the gay lobby with the Democratic Party, had the effect of pulling the gay issue off the list of politically respectable campaign themes. Thereafter "family values" became a rhetorical label that could be exploited by Democrats with welfare-giveaways as easily as it could by Republicans seeking the votes of the Religious Right.

The neocons, who participated in the war on the "Nazi" Buchanan, were hoist by their own petard. They could no longer be insensitive to gays without appearing to imitate

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INTELLIGENCE BRIEFING

Can a movie bring down the state? We're about to find out. "Waco: the Rules of Engagement" was made by professional Hollywood types who first took the government's side. But they changed their minds when their investigation revealed Waco to have been one of the great crimes in American history.

The Branch Davidians were murdered by the FBI--by arson and machine gun--and then the crime scene, as an indignant local sheriff points out, was razed to destroy the evidence. Included is poignant footage of an obviously non-crazy David Koresh and scenes of life inside the church. Not the "compound," as we were taught to say. This religion, odd as it was, had existed for many decades in Waco, with no trouble for the surrounding community.

Through independent eye witnesses, and especially the man who developed the heat-sensitive FLIR film that was taken of the tragedy, we are clearly shown federal guilt. The flammable, deadly gas pumped into the church turns to cyanide, and we are shown the body of an eight-year-old child, bent double backwards by the muscular contractions caused by cyanide.

After the FBI started the fire, agents stood out of sight at the back of the building, pumping fully automatic fire into the room where they knew the women and children were hiding. The film also shows that the Branch Davidians acted within Texas law when they used force to defend their home from blacksuited and jackbooted BATF storm troopers.

"Waco: The Rules of Engagement" tells the truth about the government. Believe us when we say, you must see this film. The video is $30 postpaid. Call us at 1-800-982-7070 to charge to your credit card, or fill out the order blank on page 16.

Why isn't this a bribe? Clinton has been offered a post-presidential job at the left-wing Hollywood studio DreamWorks SKG by left-wing billionaire David Geffen (the G in SKG; the S is Steven Spielberg and the K is Jeffrey Katzenberg). As part of the deal, a $6.6-million Beverly Hills mansion is being renovated for Clinton.

"Amistad," the anti-slavery movie, is extremely boring, so expect no riots. Among its p.c. fibs, the leader of the slave rebellion, Cinque, is shown as advising John Quincy Adams on defense tactics. In fact, the two never met, but when Adams did get Cinque and his colleague off, and they were returned to Africa, Cinque set up business as a slave trader. This goes unmentioned by Steven Spielberg, needless to say.

"Anastasia," the full-length cartoon movie set in 1927 in the U.S.S.R., barely mentions the Communists, and blames the murder of the Tsar and his family on Rasputin, a Russian Orthodox monk. The plot is confusing, and the actors unimpressive, but on the plus side, it may be the most extraordinary animation ever to appear on the screen. However, the antics of Rasputin as an animated corpse are too scary for children under seven or eight. Another positive note: the movie is pro-monarchist, and Nicholas II and the Romanovs are portrayed sympathetically.

A World Central Bank? When Birchers and other marginal types were warning about the prospect in the 1960s, they were dismissed as paranoid crazies with an axe to grind. Yet now it's upon us, with the IMF planning to slather out some $100 billion on failing banks and government in Asia. It all begins with Mexico, of course, and Nafta's infamous currency bailout fund. It ends only a few years later with a full-scale, lender-of-last-resort global welfare machine. As usual the paranoid nutcases were exactly right. The silver lining: the IMF can't yet create its own money, so without a Congressional appropriation, U.S. taxpayers need not be fleeced.

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Roses to columnists James Glassman (December 9, 1997) and Patrick Buchanan (December 8, 1997) for being out front in denouncing this scam. Can't leave the praise or Pat unqualified, though: as usual he blamed the bail-out on international trade. How much clearer can we be? The rule is, as Henry Hazlitt put it, trade not aid, trade not aid.

As long as we're praising pundits, cheers to Samuel Francis for his column (Nov. 12, 1997) on the politics of *Triple R* subscriber Murray Sabrin, the most successful Libertarian candidate in history. Sabrin ran for governor of New Jersey as a paleolibertarian, and received tremendous amounts of national news coverage. For a while, even the *New York Times* was treating him as the kingmaker.

Sabrin called for slashing taxes, freeing up the business sector, and curbing all forms of spending. He was also pro-life, favoring state-level (i.e. constitutional) restrictions on abortion, and also curbs on immigration. The result was the most vote-getting and attention-getting campaign for the LP ever.

Libertarian Party News, however, which puts left-ideology ahead of even the party itself, made it appear that his vote totals were low, by presenting the percentage (5%) instead of the relative strength of his candidacy (it would be national news if the LP presidential candidate received 1%!). *Liberty Magazine* did one better. It ran a bitter and hateful article on the Sabrin campaign, detailing its supposed tactical mistakes and dishing the dirt. You had to get to the end to find that it was written by the public relations type who was fired mid-way into the campaign!

Congratulations to Christopher Ruddy, the great investigative reporter for the *Pittsburgh Tribune-Review*. His latest coup is the statements by two Army forensic pathologists that Ron Brown's corpse had a .45 caliber bullet wound in the head. The x-rays have mysteriously disappeared from the Army's files, but one of the pathologists had video copies. The two MD lieutenant colonels were put under virtual house arrest, and a gag order instituted on everyone associated with the case.

Almost everything we've heard about Brown's flight turns out to be wrong. It did not go down in a storm, but in clear weather, for example. An extra weather beacon—that could have been used to lure the flight into a mountain--was missing. The man in charge of it "committed suicide," and inexperienced black pilots were substituted for veteran white pilots for Brown's flight. Ruddy has a free email service: go to *http://www.ruddynews.com* to sign up, and for access to his past articles on the murder of Vince Foster and other Clinton crimes.

Remember when Clinton was filmed laughing it up as he exited Ron Brown's funeral, and then put on a sad face for the camera? Brown, who was under heavy investigations of all sorts, had apparently decided to turn state's evidence shortly before Clinton urged him to take his flight to Bosnia, and the grave.

More conservative meltdown: the *American Spectator*, already in trouble over the boozing of a top official, the firing of publisher Ronald Burr for asking what happened to a $600,000 Scaife grant, and the related resignation of writers P.J. O'Rourke and Andrew Ferguson, has now fired David Brock, its anti-Clinton (but pro-Hillary) bulldog. Or is that lapdog? Said the neocon mag: we can't afford his salary.

Why can't it afford his salary? Because the *American Spectator*, in concert with its fellow neocon mags the *Weekly Standard* and *National Review*, denounced any non-official view of the Vince Foster death. Richard Mellon Scaife, who has heroically supported Foster and Ron Brown revisionist Christopher Ruddy at his *Pittsburgh Tribune-Review,* cut off all further funds to the *AmSpec*. Of course, the questions raised by Ron Burr about what had happened to his money might also have had an effect.

Backing vouchers has become an ideological liability for the left-libertarian and neoconservative organizations that still do it. No surprise there: how they thought they could get away with promoting a new redistributionist spending program in the name of racial victimology is a mystery. Cato finally bowed to pressure and published a piece highly critical of vouchers, and even Heritage Foundation seems to be trimming its vouchers sails. Even more surprising, the Mackinac Center in Michigan has dumped vouchers altogether. Now they are promoting a "universal tax credit." The idea is this: if you pay tuition for private schools or donate money for others to do so, you can write it off your state tax bill.

Meanwhile, neoconservative education policy is shifting left. National socialist David Brooks of the *Weekly Standard* (Dec. 8, 1997) strikes again with a plot to nationalize schools in the name of conservatism, and, of course, National Greatness. "The education

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debate has become a national one, whether Republicans like it or not, and that the problems have to be addressed with vigorous national policies." His argument is identical to the old left cliche that we already have economic planning; the question is whether to make it rational or not.

Every day is Munich to the neocon warmongering set. Any time war is averted through talk instead of aggression we hear this same claim, as if any foreign leader not in the pay of the U.S. is yet another Hitler. More surprising is their demonization of Maleleine Albright, who just yesterday was their darling, because of how she handled the Iraq mess. Charles Krauthammer (*Washington Post*, Nov. 19, 1997) accuses her of "following a policy of craven carrot-giving to buy off a thug until the next crisis." This he calls "supine acquiescence." How's that? The U.S. attempts to starve out a foreign country, but it's Munich if we fail to bomb them too?

Was John O'Sullivan fired as *National Review* editor? Of course, despite Buckley's frantic denials. He even signaled so, in typically indirect fashion. "In the Dec. 8 'Notes & Asides,' outgoing editor John O'Sullivan writes that working at *NR* was 'roses, roses, all the way,'" points out Jared Taylor in a letter to the editor *NR* won't publish. "Really? In Browning's poem 'The Patriot' these lines were spoken by a man on his way to the scaffold. He is recalling how he was first received by people who have since turned against him. Crowds that once cheered him from the rooftops are now gathering to watch his execution."

The strange new doctrine of the Christian right elite is that we should do everything possible to harm China, especially by refusing to trade with the country, and use U.S. military power, in cooperation with the UN, to promote "Christian rights" around the world. But thankfully there are principled dissidents from this position. The American Family Association Network of Georgia threw its weight against the China bashing religious imperialists in a series of powerful mailings and articles. Being the world religious cop "is not a constitutional function of the federal government, and it is a dangerous precedent," they write. Any bill that makes enlarges U.S. foreign policy "increases the size and scope of the federal government." As for the UN, it is "an organization with a long history of anti-Christian activities." The group is against all trade sanction on grounds that they hurt people, not government. (3911-A Bemiss Road, P.O. Box 3123, Valdosta, Georgia 31604)

Good for the Pope. He may not be as diligent a Church manager as a Pope should be in these heretical times, but he sure is sound on foreign policy. At the height of the U.S. escalation against Iraq, the Pope delivered a sermon calling for an end to sanctions and the beginning of peace.

The Rockford Institute has split into two estimable parts. *Chronicles* editor Tom Fleming has become president of a new Rockford. Former Rockford head Allan Carlson becomes president of the new Howard Center for Family, Religion, and Culture, named in honor of cultural critic John Howard. Fleming compares the famously contentious previous situation to "Three Stooges baking a cake." (*Washington Times*, Dec. 10, 1997)

It's just political extremists who believe in government conspiracies, right? Tell that to Bill Clinton. Webster Hubbell reports in his new book that Clinton gave him two priorities when he became a top official at the Justice Department. "I want you to find the answers to two things for me. One, Who killed JFK? And two, Are there UFOs?" White House spokesmen are refusing to comment on Clinton's reported remarks. (*New York Post*, Dec. 4, 1997)

"The Kerensky of the revolution bows out," says an historian friend of ours. Nelson Mandela, in a speech stretching over six hours, signaled that under the African National Congress, in partnership with the Communist Party, South Africa is now moving into a more anti-white phase. The reason? Frustration that "democracy" and "majority rule" seem to be inconsistent with an advanced industrial economy. Of course, the whole place is going to Hell in a handbasket. Mandela attacked liberal whites for opposing redistribution, conservative whites for planning a revolution, the white media for being free, and white universities for sticking to academic standards. He even blamed the horrific black crime that characterizes the new South Africa on whites! This is fair warning for anyone still invested in that poor land: get the heck out. (London *Times*, Dec. 17, 1997)

While Clinton thinks we need a national dialogue on race, regular people are finding other ways to work out race troubles in practice. An MTV poll reports that 68 percent of young people (age 15-24) say it is "OK if the races are basically separate from one another in our country as long as everyone has equal opportunities." This is up from 41 percent in 1991. MTV saw this as a disastrous sign, but in fact it's a sign the people are coming to their senses after the forced integration disaster of the last 50 years. (Associated Press, Dec. 4, 1997)

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In one sense the conspiracy in Kyoto is nothing new. Governments of the world demand that the U.S. cut back on consumption and redistribute the wealth. They back this claim with bad science, political demagoguery, and central planning rationales. It's an old story. But one thing is different this time. The Clinton team displayed unparalleled arrogance, trading off American living standards for the prospect of gaining revenue through higher energy taxes and building the New World Order. *Triple R* prediction: this will prove a political disaster for Clinton. The entire negotiating team should be driven from public life.

A Great Depression coming? Economics columnist Robert Samuelson, for whom everything is usually coming up roses, thinks a major economic disaster is probable. "Americans underappreciate the magnitude of Asia's setbacks. Consider the slaughter in their stock markets. In the past year (between November 1996 and November 1997), Morgan Stanley Capital International reports the following declines: Japan, 25 percent; Singapore, 25 percent; Hong Kong, 27 percent; the Philippines, 55 percent; South Korea, 59 percent; Indonesia, 60 percent; Malaysia, 68 percent; Thailand, 75 percent.... Asia's slump could go deeper and last longer than most economists now assume." He doubts there is any way the U.S. can insulate ourselves, and adds that there's "danger of a global bank run."

When the First Lady and a female friend were tossed out of a ritzy private club in New York City recently, the official explanation was Hillary's use of a cell phone. Any theories as to the facts? RRR

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the enemy they shared with their liberal friends. In fact the neocon line on this subject, as seen in the *Weekly Standard* and *National Review*, has become tolerance and understanding. This theme alternates in neocon publications with other positions equally acceptable to liberals, e.g., imposing federal standards on American education.

Even more striking as a sign of the neocon turning toward the social left was an essay by new editor Rich Lowry in *National Review* all but endorsing Senator Joe Lieberman for president. This demarche should not surprise after the neocon *Weekly Standard* and its editor Bill Kristol backed superliberal Republican Colin Powell for president in 1996. But whereas the *Weekly Standard* endorsement of Powell was premised on the hope of remolding the candidate once placed in neocon hands, Lowry's plug for Lieberman seemed more accepting of the present left-of-center (if that term means anything anymore) product.

NR Editor Rich Lowry all but endorsed Senator Lieberman for president.

Although Lieberman favors a right to partial-birth abortion and takes left-liberal stands on other social issues, Lowry assures us that he is some kind of conservative showing a "brand of Old Testament virtue." Moreover, Bill Bennett wants him to run for national office despite the fact that Lieberman votes 95 percent of the time with Bill Clinton. Besides, Lieberman describes himself as an "orthodox Jew" and has spoken out for religious liberties. Most importantly, however, from Lowry's and perhaps *NR*'s perspective, "Lieberman can be bold. He was a proponent of the Gulf War Resolution in 1991, helping deliver enough Democrats to pass it."

This last point is basic in understanding the plug made by Lowry. Lieberman's claim to the conservative label is his identification as a fervent interventionist in Middle Eastern affairs. This is what makes him agreeable to the editors of *NR* and, above all, to the neocon empire Mr. Buckley serves, even to the point of firing his editor-in-chief last fall for upsetting the Podhoretzes, Kristols, and A.M. Rosenthal by taking the wrong side on the immigration question. Being "bold" by calling for massive military intervention against the declared enemies of Israel may or may not be a virtue. But there is no reason to treat it as a conservative asset—or as the paramount litmus test for who is or is not conservative.

Illustrative of the use of this litmus test is an essay, "Are U.S. Ethnics Disloyal?" done by neocon journalist Jacob Heilbrunn. Though originally written for *The New Republic* and Marty Peretz, this piece was then reprinted in, among other neocon fiefdoms, the *New York Post*. Heilbrunn's polemic singles out onetime neocon fixtures Samuel

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Huntington and James Schlesinger as representing the "avatar of particularism" and "the last gasp of the oldest ethnic lobby in America: the WASP establishment, which is losing its prerogatives and privileges but never really had a monopoly on foreign policy wisdom in the first place." According to Heilbrunn, these angst-ridden WASPS are now engaging in anti-Semitic, nativist gestures when they deny that the "policies espoused by a particular ethnic group may coincide with U.S. interests."

As explained by Heilbrunn, Huntington, Schlesinger, and other critics of the "unruly workings of democracy which guarantees all citizens the right to petition their government" are on the wrong side of history–as well as AIPAC. But equally clear at least to the neocons, who commissioned and disseminated this screed about their straying brethren who complained about "excessive influence" from ethnic lobbies, is the incompatibility between respectable conservatism and opposition to the American Zionist lobby. This is the one position that neocons can take without having to worry about offending the liberal establishment. Though Heilbrunn is an enthusiastic, albeit inconsistent multiculturalist, he and the neocons stand together in their desire to turn the American military into an instrument of Israeli foreign policy. And even a lifelong neocon vassal like Samuel Huntington is denounced as a nativist bigot as soon as he expresses reservations about the shenanigans of ethnic lobbies.

One final observation about the Heilbrunn screed as it appeared in the *New York Post*: it conveyed an unsettling sense of doctored McCarthyism. From the decorative pictures of George Kennan and Alger Hiss (set next to a photo of Jonathan Pollard) to the headline about a "whining WASP elite," the screed was meant to show that the real enemy of the American people is not the "Jewish spy Pollard" but the bigoted weak sisters of the WASP establishment. The anti-Semitic defeatist George Kennan and the Communist spy Alger Hiss have now given way to a new WASP decadent, the moral "relativist" who opposes the American mission to spread democratic morality. This point, belabored by Heilbrunn, may be intended to appeal to the mystical chords of conservative memory and to recall Joe McCarthy's attacks on WASP traitors "born with silver spoons in their mouths." But Heilbrunn's variation on a rightwing theme is clearly inferior to the original. Whatever may have been McCarthy's failings, unlike Heilbrunn, he did do a credible job as an anti-Communist. RRR

SEX, LIES, AND THE UNDERPREPARED

Michael Levin

Everybody has chewed over brain teasers, those apparently impossible puzzles that can be solved only by viewing some situation in a new way. You know: "The sheriff rode into town on Monday, solved all the corruption, and three days later rode out on Monday. How did he do it?" Answer: Monday was the name of his horse, not the day of the week.

Racism: Minority students in short supply at high schools for the gifted.

Many incidents in our increasingly strange society amount to cultural brain teasers. Cascading from the media, given predictable spins by the usual experts, they circle in well-worn grooves around the public mind when they should be the occasion for dropping old assumptions. Three such incidents occurred recently in New York City and State.

The first concerned Public School 41, facing the loss of a 4th-grade teacher because of budget shortfalls. Her dismissal would have meant larger classes for many students (a tragedy, at least according to modern pedagogic mythology), so the PTA began a campaign to fund the teacher's salary privately. Parents were asked to contribute a few hundred dollars each, and, since the school district in question is affluent and liberal, this did not exactly seem like Mission Impossible.

But a number of parents refused–even though, in their eyes, this meant disadvantaging their own

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children–since private contributions somehow cheat parents in poorer areas who cannot supplement their children's education similarly. Naturally the *New York Times* took up the cause of these noble dissenters. One of them, Katherine Jason, was given Op-Ed space for a piece entitled "Our Unfair Share": "public education [she wrote] has become a two-tiered system of schools that have and schools that have not.... I won't reach into my own pocket to hire a classroom teacher, even to keep my daughter's class from growing, even knowing that the quality of teaching and learning could be eroded."

So, Brain Teaser #1: Should parents be allowed to contribute privately to public schools? This leads naturally to Brain Teaser #2: What should be done about egalitarian fanatics who put ideology ahead of their own children's welfare?

The second incident involved New York City's two high schools for the gifted, Stuyvesant and the Bronx High School of Science. (BHS alone has produced five Nobel laureates.) Admission to these schools is determined by performance on what amounts to an IQ test. Competition is fierce, almost desperate; each year tens of thousands of 8th-graders apply but only 1500, or about 5%, make the cut. And, as anyone familiar with the IQ data will expect, half the students at these schools are Asian while virtually all the rest are white; blacks and Hispanics are in short supply.

Predictably enough, this state of affairs prompts endless cries of racism. To some extent the Board of Education has heeded them: it now admits 100 blacks and Hispanics who score "below but near the cutoff," and it runs a tutoring program to ready "bright but underprepared" black and Puerto Rican 7th-graders for the admissions test. To fend off reverse-discrimination lawsuits, the Board generously allows white families to apply for this program as well–but it has cleverly sited the tutoring centers in Harlem, where whites are unlikely to let their children venture. At the same time, most officials are reluctant to compromise standards further, since these elite schools are one of the few remaining incentives keeping the white middle class in New York City.

Here were feminists up to their usual moronic garbage.

This fall, though, when the admissions test harvested its usual crop of Kims, Lees and Schwartzes, a civil rights organization named ACORN went into action. It revived the cries of "elitism" that went up over Stuyvesant's new $140 million building; isn't it unfair, they asked, to spend so much money on just the highly able? ACORN invaded the office of the principal of Bronx Science, demanding that admissions standards be made "fairer" and that the school itself undertake "outreach" efforts. (To his credit, the principal pointed out that outreach efforts cost money, and invited ACORN to put up that money: see Brain Teaser #1). The New York State Legislature in reaction to similar demands in the 1960s, had made it a matter of law that admission to Stuyvesant and Bronx Science be by test only, but education officials appear to be weakening.

Hence, Brain Teaser #3: How to justify elite public schools, especially when they exclude the favored minorities who tend to be less intelligent?

The third incident, the one that received widest national attention, was a conference run by the Women's Studies Program at the New Paltz campus of the State University of New York, entitled "Revolting Behavior: The Challenges of Women's Sexual Freedom." I was about to describe the goings-on at this conference as unbelievable, but then I remembered that feminists were in charge, and nothing is beyond them.

"Revolting Behavior" featured workshops on "How to Get What you Want in Bed," "Challenging Compulsory Heterosexuality from the Sixties to the Nineties," "Sex Toys for Women," and "Safe, Sane and Consensual S/M: An Alternate Way of Loving" (at which, evidently, student participation was solicited). A work of art (?) entitled "Vulva's School" was exhibited in conjunction with the conference, and its creator, after having smeared her face with ketchup, lectured in a red cape with horns.

You can imagine the resulting uproar. The Republican governor of New York denounced the expenditure of tax money on this lunacy, and a conservative trustee of the university called for the resignation of New Paltz's president, Roger Bowen.

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Bowen for his part immediately raised the banners of academic freedom and free speech. "If you can't have groups on the margin here," he said, "where can you have them?" Very few academics were eager to rally around his first flag: here were feminists up to their usual moronic garbage, which could have and should have gotten the lot of them fired for simple incompetence. (Bowen couldn't buy an ally: Stanley Fish, the incorrigible Grand Panjandrum of deconstructionism, scolded him for hiding behind academic freedom and free speech, on the grounds that feminist scholarship is the cutting edge.)

But Bowen did have a good First Amendment case. SUNY, as a public university, cannot make invidious distinctions between opinions by sponsoring conferences on some topics while forbidding others. After all, lesbians and sadomasochists pay taxes too. And that leads to Brain Teaser #4: How do you keep public universities from collapsing into dens of degenerate idiocy while respecting the rights of degenerate idiots?

Now for the surprise solutions. Questions 1, 3, and 4, as posed, cannot be answered. Those who see public education as a force for leveling will oppose any difference in funds for different schools, and in a democracy they can enforce their conviction by vote. This right will always clash with the right of better off parents to spend more of their own money on their own children. Likewise, some people think bright children have a right to be stimulated while others think dull child have a right to be educated up to their more limited capacities. Meeting either consumes scarce resources, and who is to say which should come first?

Finally, it *is* wrong to tax citizens who despise perversion to fund perversion conferences, *and* wrong to tax perverts while censoring their views. There is no way to make both parties happy.

What makes these dilemmas both insoluble and inevitable is not the competing values they represent, but pitting these values against each other in the public arena. If New Paltz were not a public university, no problem would arise. Students who did not mind their tuition supporting S&M workshops would happily go there; students who objected would go somewhere else. If nobody wished to volunteer funds for such workshops, New Paltz would disappear. Nobody's rights would be trampled.

Likewise, if Stuyvesant and Bronx Science were private, parents who for whatever reason wished to support bright students could direct their money there; parents of students able enough to get in almost certainly would choose to do so. At the same time, parents who felt that dull students should have first dibs on scarce resources would be free to back their convictions with their own money. Similarly, parents favoring equality could donate to poor schools all over the planet, while parents who thought that attitude crazy could enrich their own children's schools. Nobody would complain of funds being forcibly routed in the "wrong" direction, since no force would be involved.

Remember the original rationale of public education when it was invented in the 19th century: that young people had a *duty* to acquire the knowledge and skills necessary for future citizenship. Unless forced to go to school, many of them would remain on farms, knowing little of the wider world. Whatever one thinks of this argument (advances in communication have obviously made it passé), it said nothing whatever about any right to an education. Parents who didn't want to send their kids to school at all did not dream of lobbying for "good" schools. All the trouble started when public educational "rights" came along—rights that, demanding resources, put groups of parents at odds. Eliminate these rights and you end the conflicts.

All the trouble started when public educational "rights" came along.

And what of B.T. #2, the Katherine Jasons of the world who prefer abstract equality to their own children? Ending public education might simply select them out, in favor of people more loyal to their own children. More likely, though, these altruists-with-other-people's-money would experience a sudden change of heart.

For I didn't tell you how the saga of P.S. 41 ended, did I? What happened was, Ms. Jason and friends lobbied the Board of Education so

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hard that funding was eventually restored to the school, enabling it to retain the fired teacher after all. She got to have her ideological cake and eat it too, posturing moralistically but not actually having to make any sacrifices, or, as she summarized the lesson: "If parents can learn anything from P.S. 41, it is that they don't have to reach into their pockets to save their schools. Instead, they can march on City Hall to demand what all New York City school children deserve."

You can bet that, once liberals are no longer able to make other people finance their crusades, and must reach into their own pockets before helping anyone, they will somehow discover that their own children are somehow especially deserving. The real brain teaser for conservatives is how to hasten the day when liberals, like the rest of us, must face this choice. RRR

MYSTERY-ON-HUDSON

Greg Pavlik

Strange things have been going on in the lily-white town of Irvington-on-Hudson, New York. Don Boudreaux, the new president of the Foundation for Economic Education, has made the venerable institution an advocate of unrestricted third-world immigration of all things. And this while it is being projected that by the year 2050, people of European descent (already a minority of 15 percent globally), will become a minority in the United States.

Now is the time for asking hard questions about the implications of this cataclysmic change, brought about by our own government. As Ludwig von Mises reminded us, liberty was the child of Western civilization and the chief division between the high civilizations of East and West: what separates us "is first of all the fact that the peoples of the East never conceived the idea of liberty."

In 1927, as Ralph Raico points out in the Spring 1996 issue of *The Journal of Libertarian Studies*, Mises dealt with the peculiar problem of multi-racial immigration to Australia. Fears of whites being "reduced to a minority in their own country," he wrote, and thereby being subjected to persecution by new arrivals from China and Malaysia, are "justified." Mises concluded that such immigration can be tolerated provided there are massive amounts of uninhabited land, no welfare or government intervention, and separate local political authorities for separate peoples. Even from Mises's perspective, then, the proper libertarian attitude toward immigration (as versus free trade) depends in part on time, place, and existing government policy.

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But at the new FEE, these are not considerations. Boudreaux began the shift in the October 1997 "Notes from FEE," a message included in each issue of the *Freeman*. He seeks to deal with an argument put forward by Hans-Hermann Hoppe (oddly, never identified) questioning the left-libertarian line on unrestricted immigration. It is not my intention to deal with Boudreaux's arguments, or lack thereof, in any depth; interested readers may consult David Gordon's excellent commentary in the winter 1997 issue of *The Mises Review*.

It's worth mentioning, though, that the October piece contains some odd claims: for example, that the government may do nothing to restrict "speech" of any kind on public property. To illustrate by example, when I was a student at Penn, a nudist organization demanded the right to walk around unclothed in public on "free-speech" grounds. Is this *ipso facto* their right? Must the public really endure a man shouting obscenities at the top of his lungs in the public square? A smelly bum in the children's section of the public library, as in the famous New Jersey case? Panhandling on street corners? Or someone setting off an air horn at a civic-center symphony concert?

Worse than providing a weak argument, Boudreaux's piece was couched in ad hominem attacks on those whom he criticizes for their views on immigration. Those "who claim to be friends of liberty" include who? Murray Rothbard, Ralph Raico, Hans Hoppe, John Hospers? Or Peter Brimelow, who, I would wa-

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ger, has done as much as anyone to promote free markets through his *Forbes* articles?

In discussions at FEE, Edmund Opitz, the last Grand Old Man of the organization, expressed his own opposition to current trends favoring massive third-world immigration. Does he deserve to be mocked? The *Freeman* had a standing policy avoiding this type of thing, but apparently the policy is suspended for immigration enthusiasts.

Boudreaux also dedicated his December 1997 "Notes From FEE" to unrestricted immigration. By Boudreaux's own account, the publication was flooded with responses to his initial article, with only a single letter in agreement.

The second piece is extremely patronizing. Boudreaux suggests that a hypothetical "Juan" seeking employment in the United States is hurting no one and so no discussion is necessary. In fact, he shows no concern at all for the framework in which the abnormal human condition of relative freedom is possible, while advancing a policy recommendation that would, by any objective measure, make the country much less free.

I was particularly interested in Boudreaux's articles as I was involved in a number of internal discussions at FEE with respect to immigration policy. While associate editor of the *Freeman*, I wrote favorably of immigration restrictions in the magazine.

One thing that is true of FEE in the past: it was never committed to an ideology of open borders. While I was there, I gained consent from Hans F. Sennholz, then president, to publish a favorable review of Brimelow's *Alien Nation*. Sennholz's own view, repeated on several occasions, was that as long as the welfare state was intact, lifting immigration quotas and barriers was beyond consideration. This is also Milton Friedman's position.

I mention my former position at FEE for a reason. Several times during my years in Irvington, there was an effort to push the open-borders line through the *Freeman* from a small number of writers associated with more Jacobinical wings of the libertarian movement. The September 1995 *Freeman* was one of the few issues that ranked exceptional, marred only by a dismissal of *Alien Nation* in Mark Skousen's column.

The Skousen article was short and gave no indication that he had read the book. Instead of dealing with any issue of substance, he mentioned that he had debated Brimelow and presented him with a replica of the Statue of Liberty. Of course, the Statue of Liberty was a gift of the French to symbolize both republican values and the friendship between France and America, and its actual name is Liberty Enlightening the World, a great Old Right sentiment implying non-intervention. No one thought of it as the statue of immigration until the "wretched refuse" poem of the leftist Emma Lazarus was affixed to its base.

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The December 1995 issue, edited by Pete Boettke, an economist then at NYU, had an article in favor of open borders and an article opposed to the idea of open borders by Tom Woods of Columbia University; a kind of libertarian debate. In the same issue I had a review of Brimelow's book, where I endorsed the need for restricting large-scale immigration from the third world. Skousen went berserk. After calling

Dean of the Austrian School of economics, American historian, founder of modern libertarianism, and restorer of the Old Right, Murray N. Rothbard (1926–1995) was a one-man army of liberty. The *Triple R* is inspired by his spirit, and dedicated to his vision.

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FEE and rudely haranguing me for nearly forty-five minutes (at which time he accused me of personally attacking him by praising another author's book(!) and denounced Brimelow and me as racists), he called Sennholz, in an effort to strongarm *Freeman* editorial policy and to get me fired. Skousen went on to attack me, Woods, Boettke (who finally hung up on Skousen), and book editor Bob Batemarco to a host of others. That was my first insight into how the immigration issue is handled by the open-borders crowd.

This was followed by some uncorrected errors in the *Freeman*. The first that I recall explicitly occurred in the June 1996 issue, edited by Jim Powell of the Cato Institute. Powell conducted an interview with Paul Johnson and used leading questions and artful editing to make it seem as though Johnson believed in unrestricted immigration. But at almost the same time, Johnson was arguing in the London *Spectator* that all non-white immigration to Britain should be halted. He upped the ante by suggesting that those already present should be paid to leave the country. A noted libertarian scholar wrote to the magazine pointing this out, but his call for a correction was ignored.

In the December 1996 *Freeman*, a biographical sketch of Frank Chodorov was published by a young Catoite named Aaron Steelman. In his article, Steelman makes a specific claim: "For Chodorov, a noninterventionist foreign policy was incompatible with protectionism or a restrictionist stand on immigration .... Noninterventionism, free trade, and open borders belonged in the same package. To accept one part of the package while rejecting the others was not only to give in to the state, but to flirt with nativism." Steelman goes on to quote Chodorov against protectionism, and to somehow suggest that Chodorov really meant to be speaking about immigration.

Chodorov specifically defended nativism as a bulwark against war.

What's the problem here? Jeff Tucker of the Mises Institute did a literature search of everything that Chodorov wrote and could find nothing supporting "open borders." Instead, he found that Chodorov specifically defended nativism as a bulwark against war. More importantly, Chodorov opposed the immigration of communists, on the grounds that they would be subversive of conditions favorable to liberty. This is precisely the argument made by many libertarian critics of third-world immigration, just crafted for different circumstances. While Chodorov may have been sympathetic to old-time, go-slow immigration (he wrote favorably of Irish and Jewish immigrants and their assimilation into the market economy), his opposition to communist immigration is incompatible with an "open border."

When Tucker sent a letter to the *Freeman* asking for a correction, nothing was done. Why? One of the reasons may be the pattern of the immigration enthusiasts: anger, evasion, lies, and insults. All the markings of an emotional, as opposed to intellectual, commitment to mass immigration.

It is more than sad to see FEE joined with the hard left, which is not so naive in its understanding of the real effects of mass immigration since 1965. For years, the left has promoted these immigration trends precisely as a means of undermining the bourgeois foundations of American liberty that it views as irredeemably corrupt.

To reiterate what even a casual observer knows: these new arrivals from the third world generally vote for statist policies and along ethnic lines; agitate for entrenching affirmative action; benefit from affirmative action at others' expense; back redistribution of all sorts; commit crimes disproportionate to their numbers; and add to the welfare burden disproportionate to their numbers. All of these are empirical facts that must be taken into account, especially when considering the far-flung idea of erasing the border altogether, which not even the far-left dares suggest.

The libertarian Old Right, of which FEE was a part, was never in favor of open borders as a matter of policy. Immigration in general was simply not an issue. During the period between the 1920s and the 1960s, immigration was slowed down considerably. The indexes of various Old Right journals (including the *Freeman*) show little in the way of commentary on immigration in and of itself.

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Why care about this particular case of open-border pushing? Well, consider George Nash's suggestion in the *Conservative Intellectual Movement in America* that at FEE "the quiet, almost obscure, and highly individualistic origins of postwar libertarian conservatism become apparent."

And, of course, FEE served as a beacon when the CIA-connected Buckley founded *National Review*, whose destruction of the Old Right fit in perfectly with the aims of the agency he so loyally served. Contrast the Cold War fervor of *NR* with Read's opposition to the Korean War. (I recommend the anti-war collection published by FEE under Sennholz, *Leviathan at War*, edited by Opitz; it contains Read's piece, "Conscience on the Battlefield," as well as some other great right wing anti-war essays.)

Does the open-borders crusade mark a permanent break from FEE's roots in the Old Right? That would be a shame. The FEE staff is great. The managing editor of the *Freeman*, Beth Hoffman, is one of the most decent persons I've known. Bettina Bien Greaves, ever-knowledgeable Misesian and wife of the late Percy Greaves, still maintains an office at FEE. And, of course, what a legacy.

The tying of FEE to the National Council of La Raza line on immigration must be reconsidered, if only in the interests of the organization's own stated ideals. RRR

Mr. Pavlik was associate editor of the *Freeman*, and he edited *Forgotten Lessons: Selected Essays of John T. Flynn* (FEE, 1995).

CATHOLICS, IRAQ, AND JUST WAR

Llewellyn H. Rockwell, Jr.

When does war accord with justice? When does it not? No philosophical system is better equipped to deal with these most profound of political questions than Catholicism. Long before the advent of "Catholic social teaching"–an unfortunate phrase that implies a chasm between individual morality and political systems–there were the political writings of St. Augustine, St. Thomas Aquinas, and the Late Scholastics. A jewel of these writings is the doctrine of Just War.

To pacifists the phrase Just War sounds like an absurdity.

How can mass killing and maiming, the very essence of war, ever accord with justice? In fact, there are times when it is necessary, just as self defense and defense of one's family and community are morally necessary. But to meet the demands of justice, war and the tactics and weapons of war must first submit to moral examination.

To militarists too, the phrase Just War sounds highly suspicious. Why can't nation states defend their interests around the globe through any means necessary? Because that way lies moral corruption and chaos. War is the health of the state and the state is the greatest earthly enemy that the faith has confronted in the long history of Christianity. God's kingdom is not of this world, but states have shown a propensity to try to establish themselves as gods, especially in the modern era.

So there must be restraints on states, particularly on their power to make war. These restraints must be based on Christian moral teaching, and they must also be embodied in the legal structures of nations, including that of international law, a product of centuries of Catholic jurisprudence, which the great Protestant "scholastics" Pufendorf and Grotius also helped spread.

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The desire to avoid war is a fundamental idea in the Christian view of politics, just as the romanticization of war is a pagan one that reflects a disregard for the sanctity of life.

What makes a just war? Every *Catholic Encyclopedia* spells it out. It must be defensive and never aggressive. It must be the last resort, undertaken after all possible means of negotiating a peace have been exhausted. It must be conducted by legitimate civil authority. (And an oppressed lower order may take up arms against a leviathan central

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power.) The means used must be proportional to the actual threat. There must be a good chance of winning (no sending soldiers to their death for no purpose). After the fighting is over, there may be no acts of vengeance.

Finally, and extremely important in our own century: no military action can be undertaken that seriously threatens civilians (much less deliberately aims at them as in Hiroshima and Nagasaki). There's a word for targeting civilians: murder. Wars are for soldiers, not non-combatants, and if all these conditions are met, war may be undertaken in good conscience (though no one can be obligated to participate).

Now for a test. What if Bill Clinton decides to bomb Iraq because Saddam Hussein doesn't want Americans to be part of the UN inspection team? Would Clinton be justified in ordering a bombing? Clearly not. It would not be a defensive action; indeed what goes on in Iraq is none of our government's business, unless its business is defined in messianic terms. Not all means of peace have been exhausted (indeed, the U.S.'s continued economic sanctions are warfare by another means), bombing would be disproportional (you don't kill someone for allegedly insulting you), and innocent civilians would surely die.

Consider what the U.S. has been responsible for thus far in Iraq. Not only has the U.S. boycott kept food and medicine from getting into the country. Not only have the trade sanctions prevented average Iraqis from making any kind of life for themselves or even feeding their children. But the U.S. deliberately bombed sewage treatment plants around the country to poison the water supply with deadly bacteria. Credible estimates suggest that more than a million people, half of them children, have died of dysentery and other preventable diseases, as well as of malnutrition and starvation, since the end of the war.

It's no wonder Catholics here and abroad—for instance Lord Acton—took the Confederate side.

By any standard of what constitutes a Just War, the hands of U.S. policy makers are unclean. That is precisely why John Paul II gave allocution after allocution in opposition to the prospect and the reality of the Gulf War. It wasn't some vague attachment to the Arab world that animated these speeches, or some naive view of the intentions of Saddam Hussein. (Although the Vatican is aware that Iraq is the least anti-Christian regime in the Middle East, with Christians able to practice their faith openly. Tariq Aziz, the Iraqi spokesman, is a Catholic, for example.)

The Pope wasn't just playing a role as a "man of peace," saying the kinds of things you expect to hear from a spiritual leader, and then can ignore. It was Catholic theology and ethical teaching, specifically as it applies to warfare, that was behind those statements so widely ignored or condemned in this country. After the carnage, all of it unnecessary, we know he was exactly right to warn of the disasters that the Gulf War would engender. The Pope has also been eloquent in criticizing the post-war sanctions as unjust measures aimed at innocent civilians.

Just War doctrine wasn't so widely ignored at one point in U.S. history. During the Civil War, Tom Woods of Columbia University has pointed out, Catholic newspapers in the North—at the direction of the bishops—editorialized on behalf of the South, the region that fought with a just cause in mind, first for the principle of subsidiarity, and then to protect homes and property from invading Union troops. Slavery has long been discouraged by Catholic teaching, but Just War doctrine could not be violated to abolish it.

That is, the greater evil—war—could not be used to end a lesser evil. Slavery should have been discontinued, as it was in all other countries except Haiti, by peaceful means.

It was a Catholic sensibility that led Irish immigrants to massively resist the wartime draft in New York, and a Catholic sensibility that led a Catholic priest to become the Poet Laureate of the Confederate States of America.

As Murray Rothbard argued in *The Costs of War* (Transaction, 1997), the South was justified in resisting invasion, and its efforts in that cause entirely accorded with Just War doctrine. It's no wonder Catholics here and abroad—for instance Lord Acton—took the Southern side. Acton's

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moving letter to Robert E. Lee after Appomattox is a stirring defense of what Acton called the "Principles of Montgomery," named after the first capital of the Confederacy, and an accurate prediction of where Northern militarism and imperialism would lead America.

In World War I, Catholic Irish and German immigrants were widely considered traitorous to the cause of the American empire. Why? Because they refused to back a global war in the name of the god "democracy," especially when the subtext of that war was the supposed theological mandate to overthrow the last surviving monarchies (particularly, the Catholic Habsburgs). Catholics suffered vicious treatment at the hands of the Wilson administration, headed by a life-long Catholic hater. They were jailed on the slightest suspicion of insufficient war-patriotism, and forced to recite a pledge to the U.S. flag–authored by a socialist New York minister–that declared the union to be indivisible by order of God.

It wasn't some mystical loyalty to the "old country" that led Catholics–both in the pews and in the hierarchy–to oppose entry into World War I. It was the reality that this country wasn't being attacked or threatened, despite the Lusitania trick, and therefore the war failed the very first tenet of Just War doctrine: a war must be defensive.

It was a morally based opposition inspired by an Augustinian and Thomist philosophical legacy; this anti-war Catholicism confronted a wild-eyed, pro-war, post-millennial form of Progressivism, embodied in the mind of Woodrow Wilson. It had also been embodied in the mind of Lincoln, who thrilled to the chilling "Battle Hymn of the Republic," in which Our Lord is depicted as joyously killing Southerners through His chosen instrument, the Northern Army.

In the inter-war period, however, there *was* a just war, because it was eminently defensive. American Catholics prayed for the forces of Francisco Franco as they defended Spain against the monstrous central government. Of course, Franklin D. Roosevelt and his ally Stalin supported the Communists. To this day, the U.S. government and its mouthpieces like the *New York Times* still herald the appropriately named Lincoln Brigade of New York Communists who went to Spain to help kill priests and nuns.

Atomic weapons are a terrifying and even demonic tool.

But as World War II approached, it is no surprise that Catholic priests, intellectuals, and politicians led the movement for non-intervention. By the same token, notes Patrick Allitt (*Catholic Intellectuals*, 1993), in contrast to those cheering on all aspects of the war, "Catholic journals in the war years never waxed effusive about the Soviet Union, Stalin, or communism, despite the Grand Alliance." Once again accused of subversion (Italians were particularly targeted, and even put in concentration camps), Catholics had to prove their loyalty to the U.S. state by putting the flag of the federal government in every parish. It remains to this day, to "balance" the papal flag.

The tendency of American Catholics to oppose American adventures abroad remained a constant theme until the onset of the Cold War. Despite moral qualms associated with raising up an imperial military bureaucracy to threaten nuclear war on a global scale, it was deemed necessary because of the sheer scale and degree of evil of the foe: atheistic communism. Whether or not that was the right decision, or carried out in a proper way, it clearly took a threat on this level for Catholics to set aside their traditional concerns about the uses and abuses of the military power.

Indeed, even as against communism, Catholics were initially strong supporters of the efforts of Senator Joseph McCarthy to rid our own government of communists, not fight a global crusade under the command of anti-Christian social democrats.

Even at the height of the Cold War, John XXIII and the American Bishops raised moral concerns about the use of nuclear weapons. As the Pope and the Bishops pointed out, a nuclear bomb might rightly be regarded as intrinsically evil because it cannot discriminate between soldiers and civilians. In fact, these weapons were designed to wipe out entire cities and could potentially extinguish life on the planet. This is a terrifying and even demonic tool.

With the Cold War over, and the U.S. government still on the global rampage with troops in 100 countries, it is again time to put the spotlight on

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the doctrine of the Just War. Catholics and all Christians have a moral responsibility to light the way out of this century of war and destructionism into a time of peaceful cooperation among nations. This is why John Paul II has been such a consistent voice for peace, and why so many Catholics have joined the effort to rein in the messianic ambitions of the new godless threat, our very own government.

There is no threat from abroad that compares with the danger that the federal government represents to our property, our families, our schools, our parishes, and the peaceful practice of our faith. It is not only a danger to us, but to everyone around the world who desires to live in peace.

What is the financial force behind the global proliferation of weapons of mass destruction? What is the institutional force behind the continued subsidization of abortion and birth control here and around the world? Whose military bases are surrounded by nude bars and prostitution, even child prostitution, at home and abroad? Which government continues to prop up and subsidize anti-Christian regimes abroad and promote policies, as in Bosnia, that bring about wars against Christian peoples?

The culprit is not in Bagdad, but in Washington, D.C. That is why every American Catholic has a moral obligation to be aware of the danger the U.S. imperium represents, to resist its encroachments so far as he is able, and to pray for its end. As a first step, the murderous sanctions on the people of Iraq must be lifted. RRR

DO REGULATORS MAKE US SAFE?

L.H.R., Jr.

It was the consumer-protection news of the season. Some brands of hanging icicle lights, a favorite item of last year's Christmas decorators, presented a risk of electric shock. In a press release, the Consumer Products Safety Commission announced that retailers were recalling these lights "in cooperation" with the Commission. Newspapers put it on page one.

Did a government agency save us from roasting on an open wire? The Commission wanted us to believe that, as well to think it stopped manufacturers from profiting from the public's insatiable lust to conspicuously celebrate Christmas.

It's the government that's unregulated.

But is it true? Not in the slightest. Let's take a closer look.

The problem was first discovered by a private safety testing group—the Underwriters Laboratories of Northbrook, Illinois. UL specializes in rendering a safety verdict on hundreds of thousands of products. It was writing safety standards long before the regulatory state was born. It's been testing Christmas lights since 1905.

What's more, UL announced the problem before the Christmas season even began, back on October 28. That's nearly a month and a half before the government decided to call in the TV cameras to take credit.

The tip-off was a phoney UL symbol on certain brands of these lights. Retailers and distributors practically insist that any electric equipment be certified by UL, and manufacturers pay a fee for the costs of testing. UL had certified some of these lights (ones with no splicing connectors), but not others. Some shady operator had tried to fob off unsafe lights as UL approved.

Underwriters Laboratories spotted the fraud, tested the product and found it unsuitable, and immediately released the information. Retailers and distributors all over the country responded by taking the lights off the shelves, and for obvious reasons. They don't want to be held legally liable, but also, and more importantly, they want to retain consumer confidence in the quality of their products.

Interestingly, UL took action even though there is no recorded instance of someone having been hurt by the icicle lights. That's because its standards of safety are determined by objective factors and many years of experience, not public relations. It doesn't wait for accidents to happen; it acts before the problem crops up in the first place.

This goes on everyday. Consumers don't even have to know the details, which is why such matters rarely appear in the press. The media aren't usually interested, considering it of concern only to those who make it their business to know.

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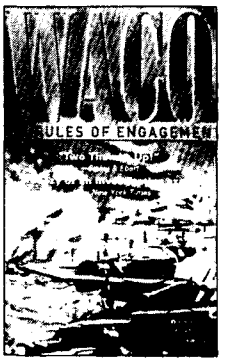

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When does the government's safety bureau come into this? Not until six weeks after UL first revealed the problem. The Consumer Products Safety Commission's press release left the impression that it was the Commission that had discovered the problem. The media dutifully echoed that spin, and readers around the country were supposed to imagine public servants faithfully testing every product we use to protect us from danger.

Baloney. The government's press release was merely a rewrite of the announcement issued five days earlier by Underwriters Laboratories, the real hero of the day. UL had published an update of serial numbers of icicle lights with fraudulent UL stamps. The release included helpful photographs of lights that do and do not meet UL requirements.

By the time the government butted in on the deal, the lights were off the shelves. The regulators sought only to make a big public splash, while taking credit for a market-driven and highly effective means of keeping us safe from bad products.

The lesson? We can trust Underwriters Laboratories, a private regulator; it exists within the framework of the market economy and its standards of safety are reasonable and scientific. But we can't trust government to do anything but horn in, take credit for things it doesn't do, and smear private enterprise in the process.

So low is public esteem for government that I wonder if the Commission's action didn't cause people to question whether the icicle lights really are dangerous. After all, it was federal regulators who brought us "safety" air bags that kill little children and compact cars that save gas but crush people, and who routinely raise the costs of business in the name of protecting the public.

The lesson is that the market does a great job of regulating itself. It's the government that operates without oversight. RRR

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